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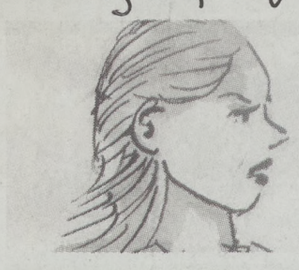

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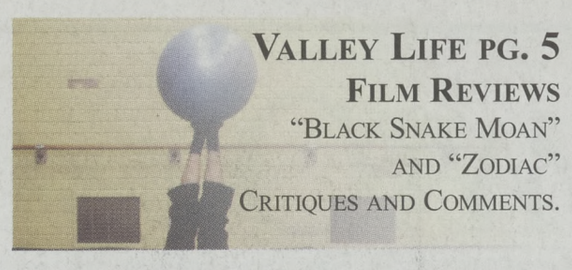

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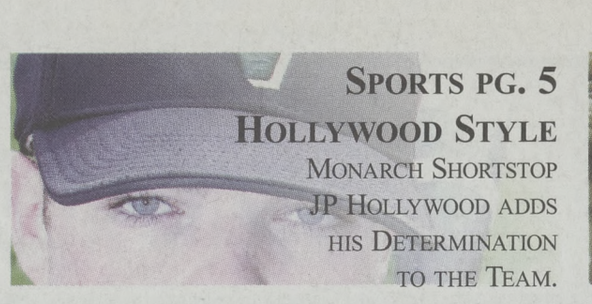

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INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT COLLAPSES IN COMPUTER LAB.
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VALLEY STAR

THE INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF LOS ANGELES VALLEY COLLEGE

VOLUME 66, ISSUE NO. 3 | MARCH 7, 2007 | IT'S *YOUR* PAPER

Valley College LEEDs the Way

BY DIANA QUEZADA
STAFF WRITER

Being the first of the nine Los Angeles community colleges to successfully install an energy-efficient system in the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) building, Valley College is making a significant impact on conserving energy.

After much concern about energy costs and energy efficiency, the Los Angeles Community College District Board of Trustees passed Prop A/AA last year with a 330 million-dollar budget to implement a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification project that requires 10 percent of electrical energy on college campuses come from the sun.

"We are too dependent on fossil fuels," said Dr. Tyree Wieder, president at Valley, who believes global warming is a problem. "Natural energy will help with global warming."

When Dr. Wieder became president in 1994, costs of energy were about $400,000 per year. That number has jumped to about $900,000.

Completed last year, the M&O building was the first to receive a LEED seal; something that is now required to meet the district's sustainable point-based system standards for all buildings larger than 7,500-square-feet.

"This is the future," said Mitchell D. Vaccari, senior project director for URS (Unlimited Research Services). "Buildings just need to be sustainable. Larry Eisenberg and the district, the Board of Trustees, are all doing the right thing. I can't see construction in the future other than what we're doing."

VALERIA PODOYNITSYNA / VALLEY STAR

GROUND WORK- Construction workers lay the foundations for the one megawatt energy farm as part of ongoing efforts around campus to save on energy costs and increase environmental sustainability for Valley College.

In order to obtain 10 percent of energy from the sun, solar panels and sun chillers are being installed, as well as other innovative processes. The 8-foot long tube-shaped sun chillers are placed on the roof of the building, angled toward the sun. Two prongs at the bottom of each tube stick into a second tube, and as water passes through the second tube, it absorbs the heat or cold to maintain appropriate temperatures inside.

"We could hold it for about 20 seconds before it started to get too hot," said Vice President of Administrative Services Tom Jacobsmeyer about holding the prongs during a demonstration of how the sun chiller worked. "You had to let it go."

Upon completion of the project, Valley will have a need for approximately 1,700 tons of energy usage to heat and cool 700,000-square-feet of building space.

"When Valley College installs its system, it will be the largest in the world," said Jacobsmeyer, who also says that 350 tons of energy use will come from the

see *'LEED'* page 4

Veterans Find Campus Help

BY KHARA HUBERMAN
COPY EDITOR

For those who bear the cost of war, Valley College works through its Veterans Office to support newly discharged troopers, reserves, and the dependent students of disabled vets. A student-run veterans club works to attain the same goals on a more face-to-face level. The more than 20-year-old Veterans Services program provides three main types of services for more than 700 active veterans on campus: Chapter 30, 35 and 10606.

Chapter 30 focuses on recent honorably discharged soldiers who served in active duty for three years, which makes them eligible to receive Veteran Association benefits, such as activating their Montgomery GI Bills.

The GI Bill provides $40,000 in increments over 10 years for those who were in each individual branch of the military.

"I think it's important for our soldiers to be able to come back from war and receive an education on the government's dollar," said Jose Jimenez, a business major whose best friend is in the Marines. "If the government won't help, who will?"

The second service is for dependent students. Chapter 35 allows students whose parents are disabled from the military to receive money from the government to attend school. For Chapter 35, the student must bring proof of their parent's disability to receive funds.

The third service, called Chapter 10606, is for the reserves currently in the military. Chapter 10606 allows them to receive tuition benefits for school with proof of their current service.

The Veterans Club provides social and scholarship opportunities on campus.

The club offers scholarship opportunities for veterans by attending TV shows like "American Idol," "Dancing with the Stars" and "Best Damn Sports Show Period."

"Studios need audiences for their shows... and we get money for attending," said President of Veterans Club Jonathan Smith, an anthropology major. "Audience members get paid more money for the least watched shows, the

see *'Vets'* page 4

VALERIA PODOYNITSYNA / VALLEY STAR

MOVING ON - Marine veteran and sociology major Enrique Jauregui wants to get through school without distraction.

VALLEY PEOPLE

Media Arts Teacher is Ready for his Close-Up

BY BRAD TAYLOR
STAFF WRITER

When he enters his Broadcasting 26 class, Eric Swelstad looks like he is ready to start directing a major motion picture.

His brown eyes light up when he lectures about the early days of television, and his hands speak to the class as if he is getting ready to frame a scene.

When he talks about genre films, the 6-foot-1 inch teacher constantly has a mischievous smirk on his face and a youthful energy that make him look 14, not 41-years-old.

Or as Carrie Fisher once told him, "You look like John Cusak."

"He is down-to-earth," said student Michael Kornet. "And he tells it like it is."

Swelstad chairs the Media Arts department at Valley College; currently his classes include Media Arts 101, Broadcasting 26, with the professor most excited about the newly created Media Arts 130, an advanced screenwriting class.

As for the movies he loves, films like "Lawrence of Arabia," "The Godfather" and "The Lord of the Rings" make his list of personal favorites.

"I love films that have a strong mythology," said Swelstad. "And films that are epic in scale, like Star Wars."

Swelstad found his love for teaching and film when he was a grad student at Ohio State. It was there he instructed undergrads who would work on his film projects while he was earning his Masters in writing and directing film.

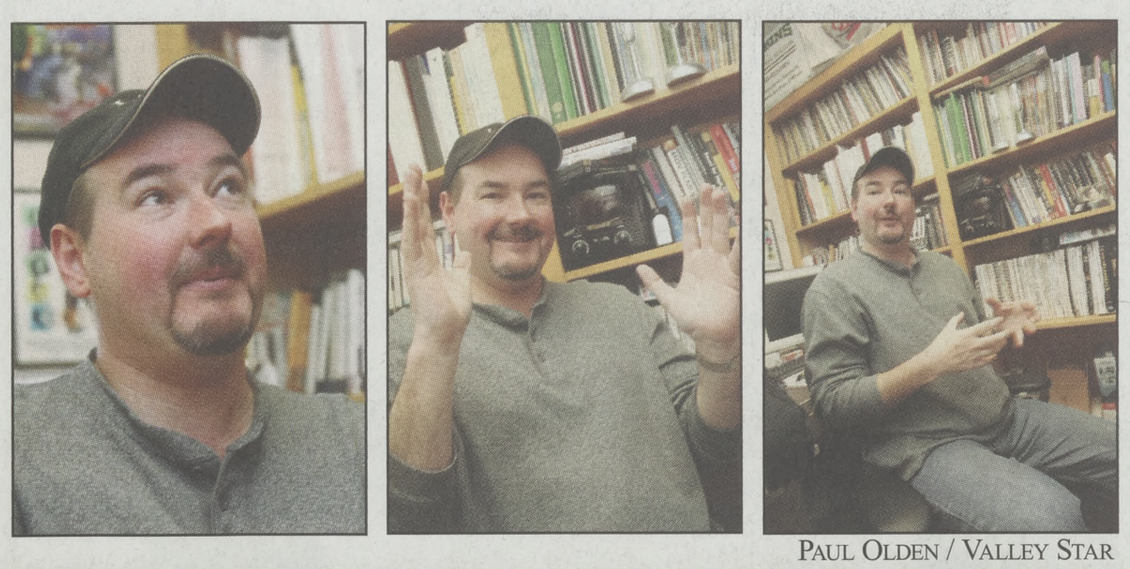
Swelstad juggles his teaching career with his writing and directing, doing both as often as possible. His film credits include "Scooter Kidz," "Lucky 13" and his yet unfinished dream project, "Fallen Angels."

Someone with such a burgeoning resume could pick to work most anywhere, but Swelstad prefers Valley.

"I love Valley College because of the diversity and sense of optimism," he said. "I love the fact that I have students who want to do gangster films because they were in a gang. I am not going to get that at USC."

Anyone looking for classes where they can just watch movies and hang out should keep on looking. Swelstad's classes are

see *'Swelstad'* page 4



PAUL OLDEN / VALLEY STAR

BIG PICTURE - Professor Eric Swelstad has been teaching at Valley College since 2001 and says his advanced screen writing course is his most exciting class because "it's great to see students emerging as storytellers."

Service Learning Boosts Activism

BY KRISTEN BECKER
VALLEY LIFE EDITOR

In spite of the fact that college-age youth are often portrayed as self-centered and oblivious to the world around them, there are plenty of people at Valley College who know the importance of giving back to their community.

Through the Service Learning Program, interested students have a way to donate their time to a nonprofit organization in return for school credit. Participants can choose to work with one of about 100 nonprofits. These include schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District, hospitals and organizations from many diverse fields.

"I really believe it's a win, win, win; It's a win for the student, it's a win for the faculty, and it's a win for the college," said Assistant Professor of Counseling Rick Brossman, who is also the program's director. "It really puts this college in a very good position in the community where we are integrating ourselves and that's what this community college is all about, interaction with our community."

Eliza Harutunyan, a psychology major who participated in the program last semester, described the experiences

see *'Service'* page 4

ASU Steps up to Fight Rising Book Costs Where They Start

By Khara Huberman
Copy Editor

With more than 600 student signatures on their petition, Valley College's ASU is trying to force the issue of high textbook prices on campus and at the source of the problem.

The ASU is leading a petition against publishers to reduce textbook costs by giving faculty and students the option of buying textbooks separate from unnecessary extras and keeping editions on the market as long as possible without sacrificing educational content.

"We decided to do this [petition] last year but it didn't take off till now," said ASU's Commissioner of Evening Division Silvia Jimenez, who is spear-heading the petition. "[Publishers] are adding online Websites and stuff but they're not giving it to you, they're charging you for it."

Textbook prices increased four-fold between 1994 and 2004, according to the Government Accountability Office of Congress and Student Public Interest Research Groups. The groups also found students spend an average $900 per year on textbooks, $420 more than a full-time community college student pays for tuition.

"The book prices are too high," said Jaquelin Rodriguez, a nursing major who supports the petition. "I haven't actually been able to buy most of the books that I need for my classes and that's my main concern because how am I supposed to pass a class or a midterm because I can't afford the book."

Student PIRGs found publishers increase textbook prices by adding bells and whistles- CD-ROMs and workbooks- that many professors say they rarely or never use.

California Student PIRG found the average release time between editions is 3.8 years rather than five, even if content hasn't changed since the previous version. New editions normally cost 58 percent more.

"In the next five years I see [book prices] increasing but hopefully this petition will change that," said Rodriguez.

"Money wise, it's like you can't afford the books or take another class because you can't afford another $100 book," said Jimenez. "Many people don't qualify for fee waivers so then they are paying for books and classes out of their pockets. If they had that extra money to take another class and not worry about a really expensive book, I think that it would help enrollment."

Jimenez hopes book prices decrease with the help of the petition but doesn't think they will. She thinks that at least it will bring awareness to the problem.

"I see life in general with money as a problem for students," said Valley's bookstore manager Claudette Burns, who supports students' concern for book prices. "Textbooks are just one of the hurdles they have to jump. It's a struggle for everybody and you can't put a price on education."

Burns continued, "[Valley] bookstore prices are on an approved margin by the board of trustee's and basically we make 25 cents on the dollar and we haven't raised our margin in at least 15 or 16 years."

Burns gives her advice as to what students can do to lessen the financial struggle of book prices. "Students should try and get the state to back off the state tax because that would save a percent. Let instructors know when a book isn't helpful in the class."

The petition can be signed in Campus Center 102 upon request. For more information on the petition go to MakeTextbooksAfforable.org.

CAMPUS CRIME

Thick with Thieves

By Will Reyes
Editor In Chief

Automobile Theft

A student's vehicle was stolen from the Coldwater Ave extension lot on the north side of the Valley College campus. The 2000 Dodge Intrepid sedan was taken between 6:30 p.m. and 9:25 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 27. Campus police conducted a search of the area but found no suspects or witnesses.

Property Stolen

A Global Positioning System device was stolen from a student's car in Parking Lot A Friday Feb. 23. The property was stolen between 9 and 10 a.m. No suspects or witnesses have been reported.

Grand Theft

A student's cell phone was stolen from the North Gym Saturday March 7. The theft was reported at 10:10 a.m. The phone has not been recovered and there are no suspects.

The Valley College Sheriff's Department asks that anyone with information regarding any of these incidents please call the department at (818) 947-2911.

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Photo Editor
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TheValleyStar@yahoo.com
www.LAValleyStar.com
(818) 947-2576

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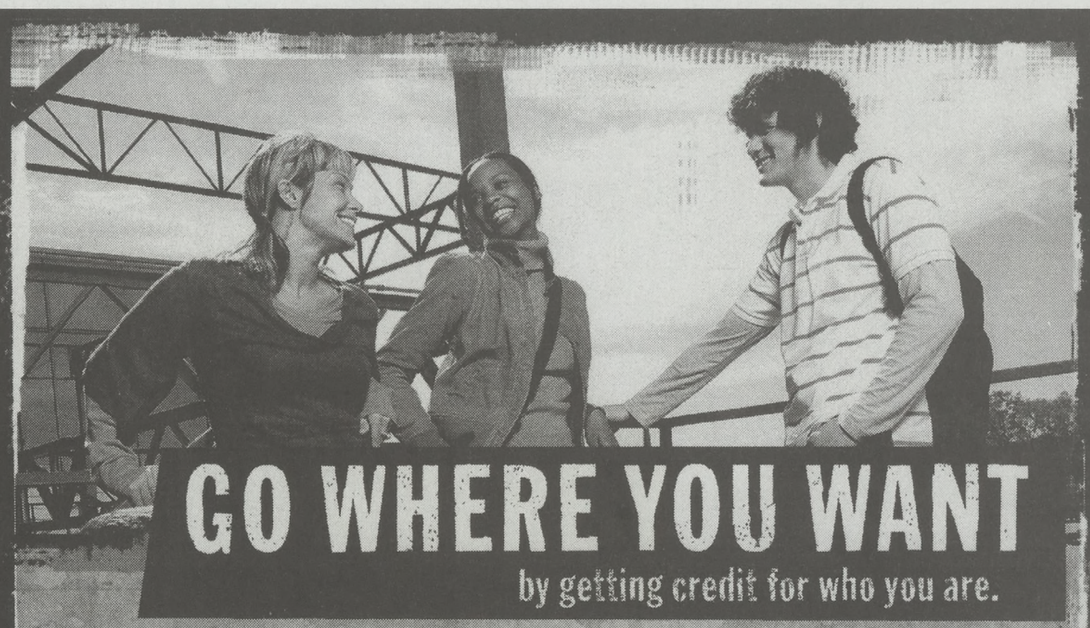
CLASSES NOW STARTING IN SHERMAN OAKS



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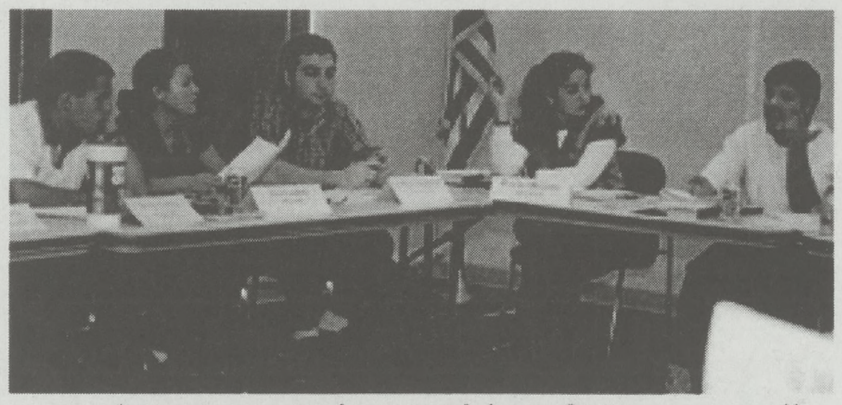

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2007-2008
ASU (Associated Student Union)
ELECTIONS

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Vice President
Treasurer
Commissioner of Public Relations
Commissioner of Athletics
Commissioner of Student and Social
Commissioner of Political Affairs
Commissioner of Ethnic and Cultural
Commissioner of Campus and Environmental
Commissioner of Evening Division
Commissioner of Fine Arts

The deadline for applications is March 23 at 4:00 pm in CC 102.

Pick up an application in the ASU office located at CC102
or at http://www.lavc.edu/StudentServWebsite/ASU/index.html

Please see the reverse page for job descriptions.

ASU Elections -- April 17 and 18 -- Monarch Square

LAVC

ASU Working For You

WE'RE NOT PSYCHIC

So tell us what's on your mind! Contact The Valley Star at thevalleystar@yahoo.com, drop by the newsroom at BJ114 or call us at (818) 947-2576. Letters should be limited to 300 words and may be edited for publication.

OPINION

AN OPINION

Egos Swell in Modern Generation

BY ANDY FEHER
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

"I am special. I am special. Look at me." So goes a common preschool song seeking to instill higher self-esteem in toddlers. Parents and teachers alike saturate a child's formative learning experience with artificial self-confidence.

Alas, such lyrics, filled with an excess of positive reinforcement, pave the way for future egotists. When these children reach an age suitable for computer use, they capitulate to one, if not more, of the personalized Websites that come their way.

It is hardly surprising that a San Diego State study released Feb. 26, 2007, found that today's college students are "more narcissistic and self-centered than a generation ago."

Using a Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), the 40 item questionnaire given to students, which asks for responses to statements ranging from "if I ruled the world would it be a better place" to "I think I am a special person," found more than two-thirds of college students scored above average.

In 1982 less than 40 percent of college students scored above average. So what's the big deal if this generation is more self-centered?

For starters, a recent event undertaken by the Valley College Katrina Committee along with the Black Student Union sought to raise money for a Spring Break trip to rebuild homes in New Orleans. While their cause was noble, the outcome was hardly successful; they raked in a paltry $226 - not nearly an amount fit to finance a trip to New Orleans.

Every student on campus could give $1 without curtailing his or her modus vivendi, but students are much too busy with their iPods and MySpace accounts to lose sleep over volunteer work.

The trend shows no signs of declining. Among the paramount reasons for the increase are MySpace and Youtube both of which encourage narcissism.

From the ordinary to the absurd, the remarkable to the deplorable, these Web sites give users the opportunity to share their experiences with people all around the world. With more than 158 million users and 300,000 joining every day, MySpace has become just one of the many bastions of solipsism.

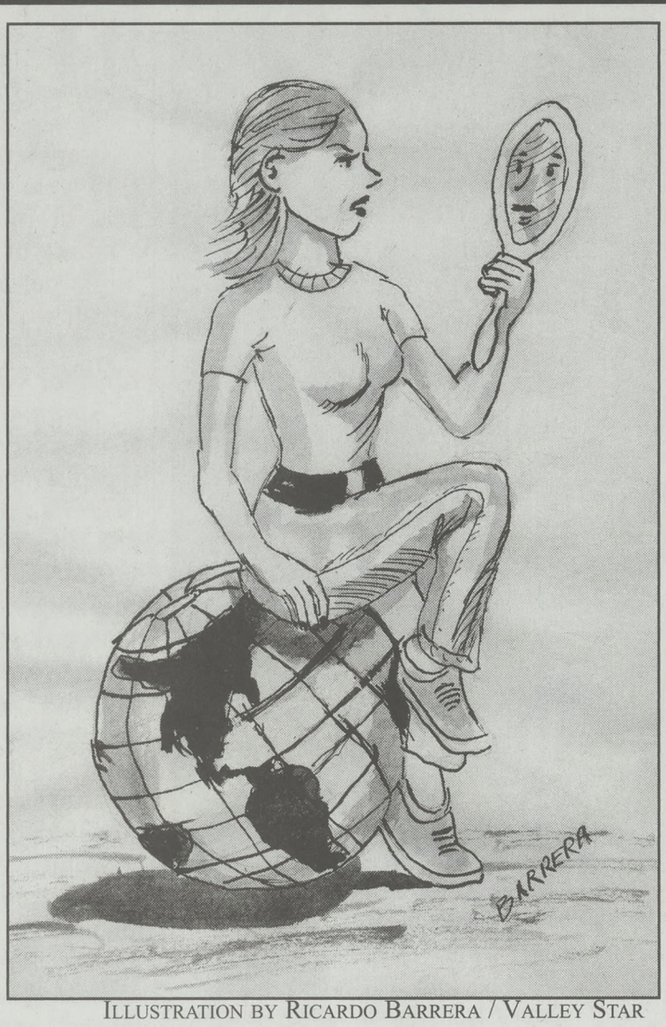


ILLUSTRATION BY RICARDO BARRERA / VALLEY STAR

Youtube, too, gained enough influence last year to serve as the backdrop for Time's Person of the Year, who was none other than, you guessed it, "you," narrowly defeating megalomaniacal Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The populist cover featuring a mirror-like panel, provides viewers instant gratification without ever having to open the magazine. Amazingly no one has been bold enough to cite this triumphalist accomplishment on a job application or resume yet.

Another sphere where people wax narcissism is blogging. Seventy-six percent, according to a Pew Internet and American Life Project, say one reason they blog is to "document their personal experiences and share them with others."

The same poll found that "younger users were among the most likely to say that they blog to document and share their lives."

It was with great enthusiasm deceased Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes famously said, "a mind that is stretched to a new idea never returns to its original dimensions." For the sake of this country's future, let's hope he is wrong.

AN OPINION

Rehab Should Never be a Celebrity's Substitue for Making Apologies

BY JOSHUA SPENCE
STAFF WRITER

In Denis Leary's 1993 album "No Cure for Cancer" he said," I'm gonna get famous. Then when my career starts to flag, I'm gonna go into a three month bender... Coke, and pot, and smack, and booze, and drive over people, and beat up my kids, go into therapy, go into rehab, come outta rehab, be on the cover of people magazine, 'Sorry! I screwed up!'"

Rehab is new slang for, "I really hope this doesn't ruin my career.... Oh yeah and I'm sorry." But what are celebrities sorry for, getting caught?

Michael Richards would not have publicly apologized on "Late Night with David Letterman" or reached out to Jesse Jackson had he not been videotaped the night he assaulted three African- American men.

No one makes a press statement saying that they just verbally assaulted three African-American with racial slurs and expects to still have a career. But he did and used the fix-it-all answer to any scandal; Rehab.

Richards' probably doesn't even know for sure why he's going to rehab, other than that's what his agent told him to do.

Isaiah Washington of "Grey's Anatomy" outed fellow actor T.R. Knight as being a homosexual, apologized, and then used another homophobic slur. It was only after a backlash from the people who write his checks that Washington decided to enter rehab for his "unfortunate use of words during the recent incident on set."

As it says in the name, rehab is used for rehabilitation be it physical or psychological. Are the celebrities that are checking in trying to improve themselves or is it a last ditch effort at damage control? If it's the former, checking out to shave one's hair and getting a pair of tattoo's before checking back in the following morning isn't exactly conducive to their health.

We'll never truly know the inner workings of someone's mind, but for those who believe that rehab is a press ploy, Michael Richards and Mel Gibson are still racists, Tim Hardaway is still homophobic, and Britney Spears is still the epitome of a nervous breakdown. It's not because we're without heart. It's because it reeks of insincerity.

If we are to believe that rehab will fix everything, we should have President Bush enter rehab for megalomania and forgive and forget the whole weapons of mass destruction and delusions of grandeur thing.

Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears used to be known for being in crappy films and making even worse records before they entered rehab, but the negative attention they get for continually going back to rehab that outweighs any positive attention for going to rehab.

Rehab works. It's intensely personal and requires blood, sweat and tears. But to broadcast yourself on thousands of tabloid magazines claiming that you're healed after a minimal amount of time is insulting to the general public.

The only thing that will remedy this epidemic of artificial and politically correct pandering is accountability.

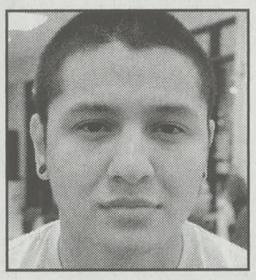
Campus View

PHOTOS BY VALERIA PODOYNITSYNA
TEXT BY WILL REYES

Do You Think that this Generation is more Narcissistic than Previous Generations?

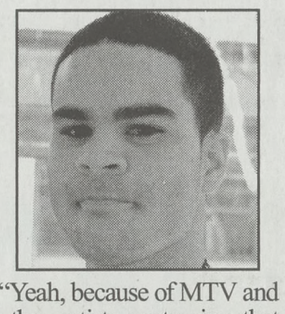
"Yes, because every thing revolves around looks. Your hair gotta be good and your clothes gotta be right or you don't fit in."

Lamyshia Knight
Liberal Studies



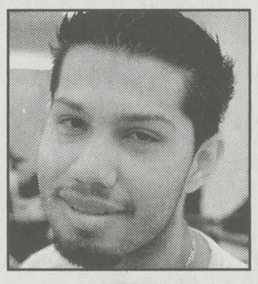
"Yeah, because of the way we grew up, we had less parenting . . . people today don't listen to their elders or learn from them."

Edgar Rosales
Fire Technology



"Yeah, because of MTV and other artists portraying that image and thinking more of themselves."

Noah Stangby
Undecided



"Yes, everybody only thinks of themselves and not about helping their own cultures or other cultures."

Jose Perez
Fire Technology

AN OPINION

Toxic Trans-Fat Foods Are Taking American Lives

BY DIANA QUEZADA
STAFF WRITER

■ FDA regulations keep Americans in the dark about the dangers of trans fat.

Don't be fooled by the labels on snacks parading their "zero trans fat" content because they are misleading and hidden ingredients are killing Americans.

Under Food and Drug Administration requirements all packaged foods must list trans fat content on their labels. However, there's a glitch in the system.

FDA regulations state that if the serving size of a food product contains less than 0.5 grams of trans fat, the content "shall be expressed as zero."

Consumers who indulge in their favorite snacks and have four servings instead of just one, with a serving size containing 0.3, have actually consumed 1.2 total grams.

Those extra grams can considerably increase the risk of deadly diseases.

If the label on the snacks Americans are eating says "zero trans fat," they need to take action into their own hands and investigate further.

The easiest way to know if a product has trans-fat is to look at the list of ingredients. According to WebMD.com, hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, and even shortening, are clear signs that trans fat is lurking.

Partially hydrogenated oil contains the deadly trans fat, which is derived from an industrial process used to make oil more solid. Its purpose is to provide a longer shelf life in baked products and it's used to achieve a texture that is more "mouth friendly" to consumers.

Because of companies' carelessness in choosing their ingredients the American population is being exposed to serious health risks. Hardened artery walls and increased blood pressure as well as heart disease and diabetes are just some of the side effects.

Top nutritionists at Harvard University have stated that replacing partially hydrogenated oil with natural oils would prevent approximately 30,000 premature coronary deaths per year.

Last June, the American Heart Association issued its "2006 Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations," making a "high-priority recommendation" that food manufacturers and restaurants replace partially hydrogenated oils with alternatives.

This should be more than a recommendation. It should be mandatory.

Tiburon, California became the first trans-fat free city in America in 2004. New York City adopted a similar policy by banning trans fat in all its restaurants. Boston, Chicago, and others soon followed suit, as well as restaurant chains like Taco Bell, KFC, The Cheesecake Factory, and even the Walt Disney Company.

There are plenty of misconceptions about what the ban entails. McDonald's won't be shutting down and "America's favorite fry" will still be served. The ban simply says to use healthier oils.

It's not only fast food chains that serve trans fat-infested foods. Even five-star restaurants fry their foods in partially hydrogenated oil.

In an Oct. 13, 2006 Wall Street Journal poll, 61 percent of Americans were in favor of banning trans fat usage in their city's restaurants.

It's a shame that 39 percent of those polled were against a move that could save so many lives.

Whether it's a general lack of consumer knowledge on the dangers of trans fat or simply a decision to turn a blind eye, Americans are endangering their health. With recent studies showing that more than 60 percent of the US population is overweight, the FDA and food companies need to make a change, or America will soon be the "Land of the Obese."

We want to hear what you think!

Send letters to the editor to thevalleystar@yahoo.com -- Letters should be no longer than 300 words, include a subject line of "Letters to the Editor" and are subject to editing.

'LEED'

continued from page 1

sun.

A non-LEED project is also in progress that consists of renovations of existing buildings to create "smart classrooms." This includes non-toxic paint and changing the floors, ceilings, hardware, and furniture using both recycled and recyclable materials. The current louvered windows are being replaced with glazed windows to minimize the amount of heat entering the classroom and skylights are being installed to maximize natural daylight.

"[The] use of natural light is important," said Dr. Wieder, who also mentioned that some of the carpet is made out of recycled tires.

The buildings are reviewed for a number of things including handicap accessibility, safety, and the mitigation of noise pollution.

The Allied Health and Science Center is currently under construction and expected to be completed in Spring 2008, with the library, Student Services building and others following close behind. The entire project is scheduled for completion in 2011.

"The whole district and the college are all very involved in working with the environment, as opposed to against the environment," said Jacobsmeyer. "So these things will all save us energy and save a pressure on the environment."

VALERIA PODOYNITSYNA / VALLEY STAR

POWER PLANT - As the sun peeks through the clouds over Valley College, it will soon warm water in sun chillers on top of the Allied Health and Sciences Center to help control the temperature of the building.

'Service'

continued from page 1

she had while volunteering at North Hollywood High School. "I talked to a couple of students who were worried about going to college," she said. "They couldn't make their decisions and I felt good helping them to make some decisions to . . . go to a higher level of education."

In addition to allowing students to receive extra credit in class, Service Learning also encourages them to discover important life lessons.

"This is a very good way for students to learn how to help others because, at first, they might think that, 'OK, I'm getting a reward for this,' but I think that whenever you teach someone that you're going to give them a reward, they will learn [to volunteer] and they will do it even without the reward," said Harutunyan.

Participating in the Service Learning Program can have many practical benefits.

"I received extra credit and on top of that, I gained experience in that department and it helped me out to get a job with them," said Jose Abarca, who participated in the program. He volunteered for the City of Glendale Parks, Community Service and Recreation Department.

While Brossman said that "many students volunteer because they want the experience," he added, "[Service Learning] serves a lot of purposes – career planning, academic purposes as well as [helping during the college] application process."

According to literature provided by the program, in Spring 2004, there were more than 200 participants in the program and Valley students completed 3,200 hours of service.

Interested students are required to fill out an application as well as keep a time sheet and complete a written reflection about their volunteer service.

'Swelstad'

continued from page 1

very challenging and in-depth, offering a crash course in cinema.

"Strict but fair," is how student Sandy Hanna described Swelstad's teaching method.

But his energy and love for the medium comes through in his lectures and his classes are the only place you will get to see films and programs not available at your local Blockbuster.

"Yes it is challenging, but I think there is a reward to that," said Swelstad. "Any class where you can see the outcome as great as the amount of work is a good thing."

The professor also talked about changes to the media arts program, which are nearing completion. These include new degrees and more focus on individual aspects of film; something that is an exciting idea for many of Valley's film majors.

"He is fighting hard to change the curriculum, for the better," said Film major Daniel Gutierrez

There is one class the film buff would love to see at Valley.

"My favorite time period in film is the 70s," said Swelstad with a huge grin. "I would love to see a class, 'Films of the 1970s' to show how important those films are even today."

'Vets'

continued from page 1

crappier ones. So if my club gets together like ten vets or members to watch a taping of Jeopardy, we all might get paid $30.00 each, which would go towards an end of the year scholarship fund for vets."

Smith added, "Veterans also receive help with applying for medical disability benefits, medical benefits, and finical aid problems."

Marine veteran and sociology major Enrique Jauregui said he had other priorities other than attending club functions. "I wasn't interested because I just want to go to school, get my stuff done, and get out," he said.

Some veterans wish that other benefits were available.

"So far [the club] hasn't offered me anything for my major" said criminal justice major Hector Perez, a veteran who works for the Veterans Services window. "I'm trying to become a police officer and if they would offer something that interests me then I would join, but so far they haven't interested me so I'm staying away."

The club meets every Tuesday from 1 to 2 p.m. in Foreign Language Room 110. The Veterans Service window is located in the Administration building with office hours from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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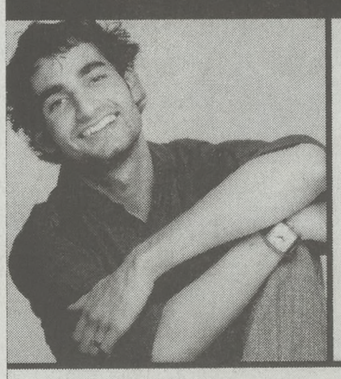

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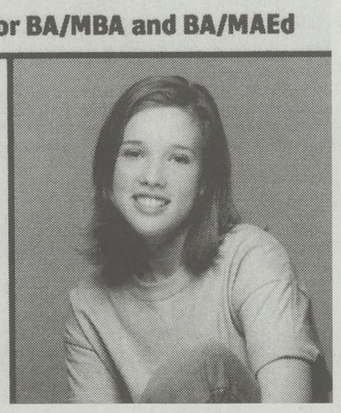

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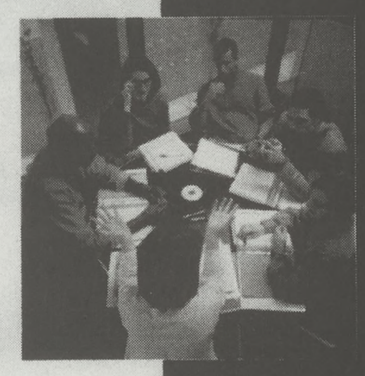

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VALLEY LIFE

WEDNESDAY TO TUESDAY

Wednesday, March 7

Administration of Justice Club Meeting
@ Valley Foreign Language FL 102; 2:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 8

Paragraph Development Workshop @
Valley Writing Center; 3 - 4 p.m.

Friday, March 9

Ricardo Cobo on Guitar
@ Music Recital Hall M 106; 8 p.m.

Saturday, March 10

"Doo-wop" Rock 'n Roll Spring Fling 2007 @
Valley Monarch Hall Auditorium; 7 p.m.; $15 and $12 for students and seniors

Valley Symphony Orchestra @
Valley Main Stage Theater; 8 p.m.

Think Transfer!

Thursday, March 8
Antioch College
10 a.m.-1 p.m. Monarch Square

UCLA
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Job Shadowing Orientation
1 - 2 p.m.

Friday, March 9
CSU Los Angeles Bus Trip
9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13
CSU Northridge
10 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 5 - 7 p.m.

LAVC SCORES

Baseball
against College of the Canyons @ LAVC
(L 3-2)
Baseball Record: 8-10, 0-2

Softball
against Cuesta @ Valley
(L 6-1)
Softball Record: 8-8, 4-2

Baseball
against Citrus @ Valley
(W 12-2)
Baseball Record: 9-10, 1-2

LAVC SCHEDULE

Thursday 3/8/07

Baseball against Pierce @ Valley
2 p.m.

Softball against L. A. Mission @ Valley
1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Saturday 3/10/07

Baseball @ Pierce
1 p.m.

Tuesday 3/13/07

Baseball against Glendale @ Valley
2 p.m.

Softball @Glendale
2:30 p.m.

Better Than 'Snakes on a Plane'

BY JOSH SPENCE
STAFF WRITER

The movie poster for "Black Snake Moan" might lead some to believe this as an excuse to have Christina Ricci in her underwear for two hours. While this may be a half-truth, this film is not about cheap thrills.

"Black Snake Moan" is a great character study in the southern gothic tradition that takes elements of irony, secrecy, and madness and in turn, reflects that on social issues. Unfortunately its weak plot only makes this film good, not great.

Writer/ Director Craig Brewer's use of music as backdrop for story worked well in his last effort "Hustle and Flow".

Using blues as the visual palette for "Black Snake Moan," Brewer deftly exposes the internal struggle and redemptive quality seen in both blues music and this film. His devotion to character combined with Ricci and Jackson's standout performance gives "Black Snake Moan" its drive.

Christina Ricci is Rae, a wild child with a history of sexual abuse, is exacerbated when her boyfriend (Justin Timberlake) leaves to serve in the Army. While Rae's nymphomania has led her to alcoholism, drug abuse, and general bad health, that path also leads her to Lazarus.

Samuel L. Jackson easily gives his best performance since "Pulp Fiction" as a blues man turned farmer who recently divorced his wife. In his absolute determination to cure Rae of her nymphomania, he ties her to a 20 foot- chain to keep her from running into the city. Lazarus' obsession with curing Rae reveals his own struggles with loneliness and heartbreak.

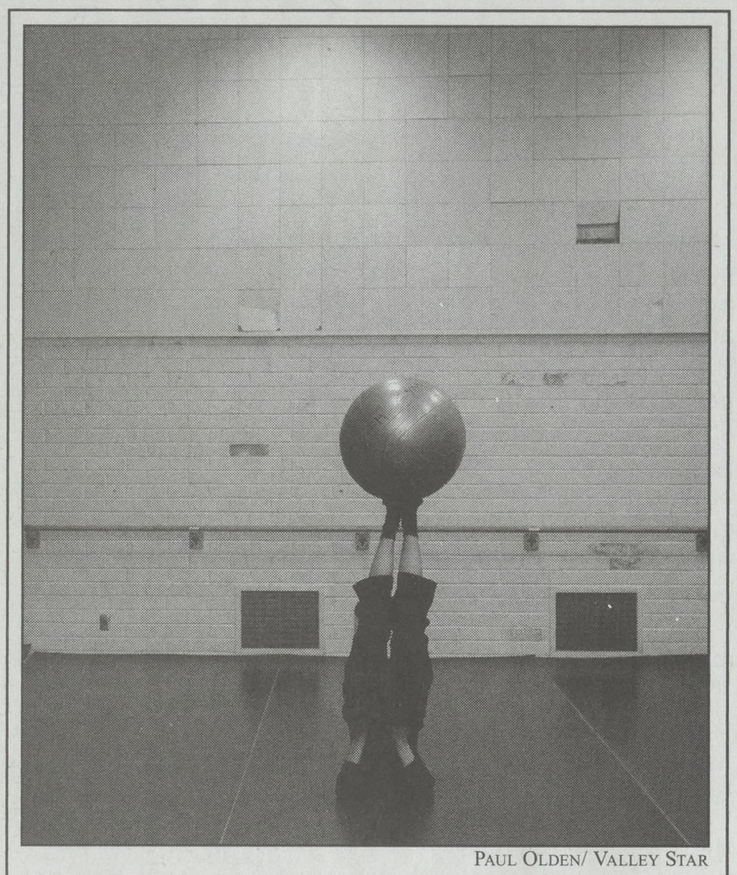
While Ricci and Jackson fit their roles perfectly, Justin Timberlake gives another mediocre performance as Rae's boyfriend Ronnie. While Ronnie has his own demons, his character doesn't translate empathetically like Rae or redemptive like Lazarus. He comes across on screen as a sniveling, whining, and scared little boy.

Timberlake may have a certain "it" status when it comes to music, but that "it" doesn't transfer over to film. It's amazing how such a bad actor made it into two good films this year.

Credit also goes to John Cothan, Jr. as R.L., the peace and understanding to Lazarus' fire and brimstone.

Although the film has a weak storyline and a subpar ending, the message of love, the loss that comes with it, redemption and self- acceptance shine through in the transformation of these characters.

"Black Snake Moan" is definitely not a step backward for Brewer, but rather a step to the side considering that "Hustle and Flow" had a deeper storyline but not as many in- depth characters. This film is not so much about the final destination, but the journey along the way.



PAUL OLDEN/ VALLEY STAR

HAVING A BALL - Eswin Ramirez, a costume design major, warms up for his yoga class. Yoga is one of the many health-centered classes offered at Valley.

Zodiac is a Cut Above the Ordinary Thriller

BY BRAD TAYLOR
STAFF WRITER

Director David Fincher's latest thriller, "Zodiac," is a Gemini of a film that manages to both impress and irritate.

The film is based on Robert Graysmith's books on the infamous Zodiac killer, who held the San Francisco Bay Area in fear in the late 60s and throughout the 70s. The murderer was the inspiration for films such as "Dirty Harry" and "The Zodiac Killer;" both of those took significant liberties with the facts. But this new "Zodiac" follows Graysmith's book to the letter.

Fincher takes a wide departure from the MTV directing style that put him on the map with "Se7en." Instead, he has chosen a classic approach, favoring his actors instead of quick cuts and radical camera shots. In fact the film owes more to '70s movies like "All the President's Men" than it does to any recent thrillers.

Jake Gyllenhaal plays Robert Graysmith, a cartoonist for the San Francisco Chronicle, who becomes obsessed with finding out who Zodiac is. To his credit, Gyllenhaal holds it together while playing opposite the scenery-chewing Robert Downey Jr. as Paul Avery, the Chronicle's hard-drinking crime reporter writing about the killings. Avery wants nothing to do with grown-up Boy Scout Graysmith, but both are drawn into the Zodiac's web and soon become victims of their personal obsessions.

This is the type of movie you just don't see much of in mainstream Hollywood - a character driven serial killer picture that doesn't rely on blood-splattered walls or manic car chases.

The best performances come from indie darlings Mark Ruffalo as the determined detective at the end of his rope, and Chlöe Sevigny, who brings raw emotion and heartache to her role as Graysmith's far-too patient wife. These two add much needed gravity that holds the movie down to earth.

But the real gem in this film is the impeccable realism that Fincher infuses into every scene. The costuming and sets create the perfect atmosphere in which to tell the story. You get the feeling of actually being in the 1970s, with every detail down to the "New Scooby-Doo Movies" theme song playing faintly in the background during breakfast.

This is the type of movie you just don't see much of in mainstream Hollywood - a character-driven serial killer picture that doesn't rely on blood-splattered walls or manic car chases. Fincher shows us how such a sensational story changes everyone it touches, but this is also its downfall. Coming in at 158 minutes, this thriller runs out of thrills about half-way through. With the ending known going in, there isn't much to fear or much suspense in the last act. The audience is left to keep up with the crowded cast of characters and try and stay with the dialogue-heavy mystery.

So if you are going to see "Zodiac" because you loved "Se7en" or "Fight Club," be warned: this is a much more personal film that runs long and asks the audience to be an active participant. But if you are a fan of 70s cinema and character-driven thrillers then all signs point to yes for you.

SPORTS

Hollywood Thrives on Competition

BY JESSICA SHAFFER
OPINION EDITOR

It is no surprise that baseball encourages competition, but Valley College's starting shortstop Joseph Patrick Hollywood uses his aggressive nature to gain an advantage over his opponents.

"I played against a lot of these guys [on the team] my whole high school career and usually you hate a lot of them ... through high school," said Hollywood. "It turns out I like a lot of them. You find out you're all the same kind of players, but when you are on different teams you just hate each other."

Hollywood, nicknamed J.P. or "Jeep," is thriving in his first semester at Valley and though there may have been competition between players before they came to play for the Monarchs, Hollywood works well with his teammates and is a great defensive player.

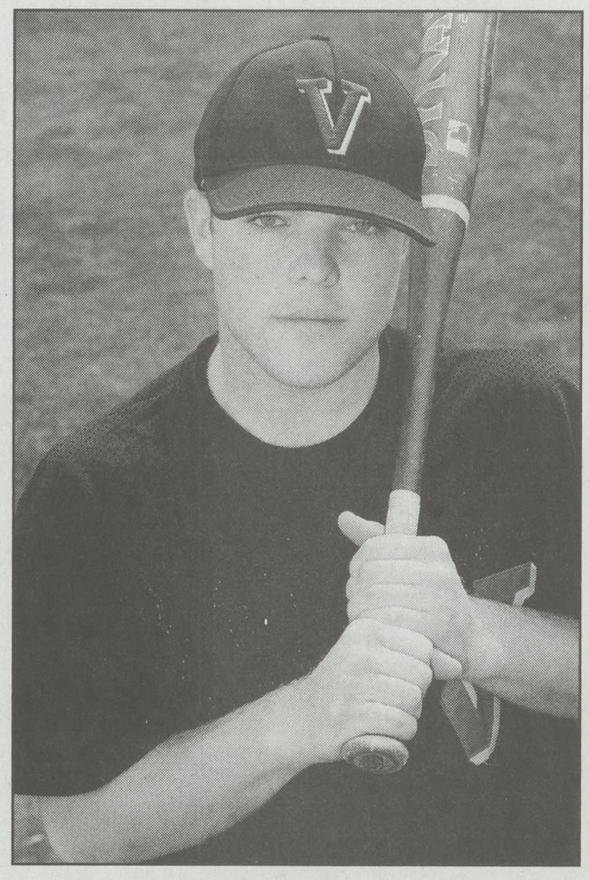
The Woodland Hills resident uses the competition to motivate him but, according to his coaches, he has a professional attitude when he takes the field.

"J.P. is an excellent baseball player," said Coach Dave Mallas. "He's got a great work ethic. He comes here every day on time, gives us 100 percent whenever he's out here, and as a coach that is all we ask for."

The talented shortstop has both strong offensive and defensive, making only four errors so far this season, while also leading the team in hits with a .357 batting average.

The road to Valley was an interesting one for the brown-haired, blue-eyed Hollywood. Standing at just 5 feet, 10 inches tall, he overcame his height disadvantage and was awarded an athletic scholarship to a four-year school in Reno, Nevada, but instead chose to come to Valley. Although he lives closer to Monarch's rival Pierce College, he says he came to Valley to improve his grades and to play for Mallas after hearing about the coach from teammate and long-time friend Jordan Brandt.

"[Hollywood's] a very easy-going guy," said Brandt. "[He's] the kind of guy you want to be around ... He's not going to cause any problems. He's always in a good mood ... There's never any negativity when I'm kicking it with him."



PAUL OLDEN/ VALLEY STAR

FIERCE COMPETITOR - Valley College shortshop, J. P. Hollywood turned down a scholarship to a four-year college to attend Valley

Hollywood is not sure of what he wants to major in yet but he does want to have a career in real-estate investments and to continue to play baseball as long as he can.

In his spare time he likes to play video games, such as "Super Smash Bros." His favorite character is Luigi. In video games, just as in baseball, he is a competitive person.

In a game like baseball, there will always be winners and losers, and Hollywood's disposition gives him an edge.

"He's a competitor, which is what I like," said Mallas. "If he doesn't get along with his opponents, it doesn't matter to me. As long as he has good relationships with his coaches and his teammates, he doesn't need to be friends with ... any other teams that we play against. I like his competitiveness. That's I think a lot of what makes him so good."

HARD HATS INVADE CAMPUS

PHOTOS BY ALLAN GOLD TEXT BY PAUL OLDEN

New Valley College construction and rehabilitation projects are springing up all around, populating the campus with hard-hat clad workers.

The head gear is required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, with some workers personalizing their protection. Then again ... others are just plain yellow, maybe lacking pizazz but getting the job done nonetheless.